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**For immediate release**

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**COVID-19 Community Preparedness News Release**

As of March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Nebraska has five cases of COVID-19. None of these cases are in the Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) nine county health district. The health department encourages preparedness in all communities in southwest Nebraska, in order to protect yourself and your community from getting and spreading respiratory illnesses like COVID-19. This includes educating your family on how to prepare at home and learning more about who should and should not wear a mask. It is also important to know how to self-quarantine, especially for persons returning from travel who had potential exposure to COVID-19. **Everyone has a role to play in getting ready and in staying healthy.**

Public Health Nurse Melissa Propp, RN recommends, “Social distancing is a good precaution to take to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This means using non-contact greetings instead of handshaking and keeping a distance of 6 feet between yourself and others when in large crowds.”

**What you can do at home:** Plan and prepare by creating a household plan of action. Take everyday preventive actions, such as washing your hands, covering your cough, and staying home if you are sick. Create habits and reminders to avoid touching your face, and clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces. Be prepared if your child’s school or childcare facility is temporarily dismissed or for potential changes at your workplace. You can find more information on SWNPHD’s website at [www.swhealth.ne.gov](http://www.swhealth.ne.gov).

**When to wear a mask:** CDC does NOT recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

**Report travel to SWNPHD:** If you live in Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins or Red Willow counties and have exposure to COVID-19 and/or traveled within the last 14 days to one of the countries where COVID-19 is circulating, please report to Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department at 308-345-4223. Currently these countries are China, Iran, Italy, Japan, South Korea. You can also self-report to the Nebraska Public Health Online System at <https://dhhs.ne.gov/pages/Coronavirus.aspx>.

For travelers who have been to China, Italy, South Korea, and Iran, Nebraska’s current state requirements are to self-report as directed above AND to self-quarantine for 14 days from the time they left these countries. This does not mean they have COVID-19, it is just a precaution because of potential exposure. These individuals will be actively monitored for symptoms by SWNPHD for the 14-day quarantine period.

**Guidelines for self-quarantine:** You can self-monitor yourself at home by taking your own temperature and being aware of your symptoms. If you develop a fever (100.4 degrees F or greater), shortness of breath, or cough you should contact the health department. Quarantine involves staying at home, not having visitors and not going out in public in order to help avoid the spread of disease.

“We are constantly getting updates from the state of Nebraska and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). This information is shared with public health partners and communities as it changes,” states Kathie Skeen, Emergency Planning Coordinator. “We continuously keep our website and social media sites updated with the latest information from credible sources such as the CDC and State of Nebraska.”

For more information, contact SWNPHD at 308-345-4223. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10<sup>th</sup> St (1 block north of Arby’s) in McCook or at 501 Broadway in Imperial (5<sup>th</sup> St. entrance). Information can also be found on the website [www.swhealth.ne.gov](http://www.swhealth.ne.gov) and on Facebook and Twitter.

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**WHEN TO USE A MASK**

**For healthy people wear a mask only if you are taking care of a person with suspected 2019-nCoV infection**

**Wear a mask, if you are coughing or sneezing**

**Masks are effective only when used in combination with frequent hand-cleaning with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water**

**If you wear a mask then you must know how to use it and dispose of it properly**

World Health Organization



## KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

	ISOLATION	QUARANTINE
Used to stop or limit the spread of disease	✓	✓
Separates someone who is sick from those who are not sick	✓	✗
Separates someone who may have been exposed to see if they become sick	✗	✓